LEARNING
TO REALIZE EDUCATION’S PROMISE

#wdr2018

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“He had an old dog named Jack”
Who is Jack?

South Africa

Could answer

Grade 4

Source: IEA (2012)
“He had an old dog named Jack”
Who is Jack?

South Africa

Could not answer

Grade 4

Source: IEA (2012)
Rural India

46
- 17
\[?\]

Could not solve

Grade 3
Rural India

Could not solve

46
- 17
?

Grade 5
Brazil

Progress in Math (PISA 15 year olds)
Brazil

Time to reach OECD average in Math (PISA 15 year olds)

75 years
Brazil

Time to reach OECD average in **Math** and **Reading** (PISA 15 year-olds)

>260 years
Percent of end-of primary students who meet a minimum proficiency threshold for learning in math?

- High income countries
- Upper-middle income countries
- Lower-middle income countries
- Low income countries
The learning crisis becomes a skills crisis

PIAAC Numeracy 2012 (16-24 year olds)

PIAAC Literacy 2012 (16-24 year olds)

PISA Math 2006 (15 year olds)

PISA Reading 2006 (15 year olds)
High inequalities

TERCE 2012
Proportions of students from the richest and poorest quintiles students scoring at each level at the end-of-Primary
There can be a large gap between learning-adjusted and unadjusted years of schooling.

Years of **Schooling** are not the same as **Learning**

Average years of schooling of 25-29 year olds, unadjusted and adjusted for learning.
Remaining inequities in access

Percentage of youth (ages 15–19) who have completed each grade

NFHS data for India from 2015; other countries from 2012.
Education has great promise

Jobs and higher earnings
Reduced poverty

Productivity and growth
Poverty reduction

Healthier and better-educated families
Resilience and adaptability

Better institutions/service delivery
Civic engagement and social cohesion
Education has great promise, but too often it doesn’t deliver

Education can’t do it alone... ...but it can do much better on learning
What matters for growth is learning

Annual average per capita growth in income 1970-2015, conditional on test scores, years of schooling, and initial income
Immediate causes of the learning crisis

How do teaching and learning break down?
Immediate causes of the learning crisis
Immediate causes of the learning crisis

Non-deprived infant

Infant exposed to high deprivation
Immediate causes of the learning crisis

Percentage of children ages 3–5 who can recognize 10 letters of the alphabet
Immediate causes of the learning crisis

Teacher absence in India (2011)

* Source: Karthik Muralidharan, Jishnu Das, Alaka Holla, Aakash Mohpal (2017)
Immediate causes of the learning crisis

- Unskilled and unmotivated teachers
- Unprepared learners
- School management
- School inputs that don't affect teaching and learning

One Laptop Per Child initiative in Brazil

Textbooks in Sierra Leone
Immediate causes of the learning crisis
Deeper causes of the learning crisis

Why are these problems allowed to persist?
Barriers to learning at scale

Technical complexity

Coherence between elements is hard, e.g. curriculum, teacher preparation, evaluation, student assessment

Lack of coherence undermined teacher effectiveness in South Africa in the early 2000s
Deeper causes of the learning crisis

Barriers to learning at scale

Political economy

Multiple actors have competing objectives, driving misalignment and incoherence

Political negotiation undermined teacher pay reform in Indonesia in the late 2000s

→ Systems are stuck in a low-learning, low-accountability, high-inequality equilibrium
Don’t give up: Success is possible
Don’t give up: Success is possible

→ Sustained improvement: Republic of Korea
→ Remarkable performance: Vietnam
→ Profound reforms: Peru
→ Rapid progress in reading: India, Liberia, Papua New Guinea
→ Broad-based approach to improvement: Malaysia, Tanzania
Countries need to take action showing that learning really matters to them
Assess learning to make it a serious goal
Assess learning through measurement

Assess learning ....

... to shine a light on the hidden exclusion of low learning
Assess learning through measurement

Many countries don’t know whether students are learning: Percent of countries in each region with a nationally representative learning assessment

Source: UIS 2016.
Act on evidence to make schools work for all learners
Act to improve learning at student, classroom and school levels

Ensure learners are prepared and motivated
- Investing in the early years
- Removing financial barriers/Demand-side incentives
- Preparation for training

Early childhood program in Jamaica led to 25% higher earnings in adulthood

Conditional cash transfers in Burkina Faso led to a 20% increase in girls’ enrollment
Act to improve learning at student, classroom and school levels

**Ensure teachers are skilled and motivated**
- Effective professional development
- Motivation and incentives
- Teaching to the level of the students

In Liberia, training teachers to use student assessments more than doubled students’ reading fluency.

Grouping students by ability level in Kenya increased test scores for all students.
Act to improve learning at student, classroom and school levels

In the US, training principals to provide feedback to teachers increased student learning by 0.19 SD on average, reaching as high as 0.35 SD for some schools.

In India, adaptive learning software doubled students’ rate of learning.

Ensure school investments complement students learning from teachers
- Inputs and infrastructure
- Technology
- Management and school-based decision-making
Act to improve learning at student, classroom and school levels

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**Preparing young people for jobs requires dynamic systems that link them to employers**
- Demand-driven
- Flexible
- Effectively integrated with employers

**Ensure school investments complement students learning from teachers**
- Inputs and infrastructure
- Technology
- Management and school-based decision-making
Align actors
to make the whole system work for learning
Align actors by tackling technical and political barriers

Tools for **breaking out** of low-learning traps

- Information and metrics
- Coalitions and incentives
- Innovation and agility
Align actors by tackling political barriers

Make **learning** salient

**Information and metrics**

- **Germany 2001**
- **Peru 2012**
  - “PISA shock” led to large scale reform efforts
- **Brazil**
  - Index of basic education quality
- **England**
  - League tables

**Tanzania**

- School-leaving exam scores + UWEZO citizen-led assessment + Service Delivery Indicators
  - Political pressure
  - Large-scale education reform program

Germany 2001
Peru 2012
“PISA shock” led to large scale reform efforts
Brazil
Index of basic education quality
England
League tables
Align actors by tackling technical and political barriers

Forge **coalitions** for learning

**Chile**
- Long-term negotiated reform process
- Confidence-building and opt-in reforms

**Malaysia**
- Lab model:
  - Two-month exercise with all key players
  - Planning and decision-making
Figure out how to improve learning in the **local context**

**Burundi**
- Adaptive approach successfully distributed textbooks in post-conflict setting

**India**
- Experiment showed grouping students by ability level worked
- Then NGO tested variants at scale (with government)

**Innovation and agility**
An aligned system focused on learning
An aligned system focused on learning

**Assess** learning to make it a serious goal

**Act** to make schools work for all learners

**Align** actors to make the whole system work for learning
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